

Message Text

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SUBJECT: NATO ASSESSMENT SERIES CONTRIBUTION
PASS FOLLOWING VIA NATO-WIDE COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM (NWCS)
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NATO CONFIDENTIAL FROM WASHINGTON
NADA/ASSESSMENT/MAY 002/MFA WASHINGTON/
SUBJECT: CHILE: POSITIVE MOVEMENT ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS
FRONT

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IN RECENT WEEKS, A COMBINATION OF FACTORS HAS MOVED
THE CHILEAN MILITARY REGIME TOWARD IMPROVEMENT IN
THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION AND ACCELERATED MOVEMENT
TOWARD THE REESTABLISHMENT OF CONSTITUTIONAL
GOVERNMENT. THE REGIME HAS:

-- LIFTED THE STATE OF SIEGE, ALBEIT WHILE

RETAINING REPRESSIVE EMERGENCY POWERS;

-- ESTABLISHED CONDITIONS PERMITTING THE
RETURN OF MOST POLITICAL EXILES;

-- ANNOUNCED A BROAD PLAN TO GRANT AMNESTY
TO POLITICAL PRISONERS WHICH SHOULD FREE OR
SEND INTO FORCED EXILE THE 200-300 PERSONS
STILL DETAINED, AND REMOVE MANY OTHERS FROM
TRIAL OR PAROLE STATUS.

-- INVITED THE U.S. REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UN
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (UNHRC) TO VISIT CHILE
AND DISCUSS A FORMULA UNDER WHICH CHILE WOULD
PERMIT A LONG DELAYED VISIT OF THE COMMISSION'S
AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON CHILE;

-- COOPERATED WITH THE U.S. IN INVESTIGATING THE
LETELIER ASSASSINATION AND IN EXPELLING A U.S.
CITIZEN, MICHAEL J. TOWNLEY, WHOSE TESTIMONY IS
CRITICAL TO OUR CONTINUING INVESTIGATION;

-- ANNOUNCED THAT THE PROCESS OF DRAFTING A NEW
CONSTITUTION WOULD BE COMPLETED THIS YEAR, A
CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM HELD NEXT YEAR, AND A
PARTIALLY ELECTED CONGRESS REESTABLISHED SOON AFTER--
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THUS MOVING UP THE TIMETABLE FOR RETURN TO
CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT BY ABOUT FIVE YEARS;

-- RESHUFFLED THE CABINET TO INCLUDE MORE
CIVILIANS IN KEY POSTS (NOW: 11 CIVILIAN, 5 MILITARY).

THE REGIME HAS TAKEN THESE ACTIONS AS A RESULT OF
GROWING INTERNAL PRESSURES FOR POLITICAL EVOLUTION,
A DESIRE TO AVOID OPEN SPLITS WITHIN THE RULING
JUNTA, STRONG U.S. AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE
ON HUMAN RIGHTS, AND A DESIRE TO END CHILE'S INTER-
NATIONAL ISOLATION WHICH HAS BEGUN TO PINCH. RELATIONS
WITH ITS NEIGHBORS ARE AT A LOW EBB. BOLIVIA HAS
BROKEN RELATIONS CITING THE LACK OF PROGRESS IN
NEGOTIATIONS FOR A CORRIDOR TO THE SEA; ARGENTINA
HAS REJECTED AN ARBITRATION AWARD FAVORING CHILE IN
THE BEAGLE CHANNEL DISPUTE; AND LATENT PERUVIAN REVANCH-
ISM AND ARMS PURCHASES COULD BE REGARDED AS THREATENING
AS NEXT YEAR'S CENTENNIAL OF CHILE'S VICTORY IN THE WAR
OF THE PACIFIC APPROACHES.

PEOPLE ARE NO LONGER "DISAPPEARING"; TORTURE AND

ARBITRARY POLITICAL ARRESTS ARE MUCH REDUCED.
BUT LABOR UNION RIGHTS REMAIN HEAVILY CIRCUMSCRIBED.
WHILE THERE IS AN ACCELERATED POLITICAL TIMETABLE,
THE PLANS FOR CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE DO NOT, AS YET,
CLEARLY ENCOMPASS A RETURN TO GENUINE DEMOCRACY, THOUGH
IN RETROSPECT THEY MAY COME TO BE SEEN AS HAVING
MARKED THE BEGINNING OF A PROCESS OF POLITICAL
DEVELOPMENT THAT WILL END IN THE RESTORATION OF
DEMOCRACY.

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